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My name is Mikaelle Olivier and I am a former secondary science educator and taught at Hartford Public High School. I am writing today in support of Raised Bill 948, An Act Addressing Education Funding and Racial Equity in Connecticut. As a Connecticut public school educator, I have seen firsthand the impact that funding inequity has had on my students.

When writing curriculum for the district during the transition to the Next Generation Science Standards, the need for an update in laboratory equipment statewide became apparent, as did the lack of funding needed to do so. It was clear that in order for us to engage our students and prepare our scholars to be the innovators of tomorrow they needed to begin training their scientific skills today. However, we did not have the means to provide them those opportunities. Microscopy is a basic yet essential hands-on skill that every student in biology must master within their first few units and utilize constantly throughout the curriculum and yet year after year it was left up to myself to either fundraise or buy microscopes with hundredS of dollars of my own funds to accommodate my students' needs. That was the case for any equipment or technology necessary to create an engaging laboratory classroom. So despite the fact that as a state we were adopting this new and exciting way of teaching science through inquiry, investigation, and anchoring phenoma, an entire population of students was being left behind through no fault of their. We are doing our students a great disservice holding them to high expectations without providing them with all of the tools necessary for them to succeed.

In my current work as an outreach director, I am in constant contact with educators whose classrooms are currently negatively impacted by insufficient funding. As I speak with those teaching within this pandemic there is a resounding call for additional personnel in schools, especially in the form of interventionists, trauma support, language specialists, and additional teaching staff. Educators are currently tasked with far too many additional duties outside of those of a teacher as well as outrageously large class sizes. With an increase in teaching staff comes a reduction in class sizes which studies have shown time and time again leads to a dramatic improvement in learning outcomes.

The \$639 million racial funding disparity gap in this state says one thing very clearly. It says that we prioritize our white students over our students of color and it is unacceptable. Funding inequities across and within our schools are preventing our students--particularly English Language Learners, students of color, and children from low-income families--from getting the excellent education they deserve. Connecticut students have faced unprecedented hardship over the past year, and cannot wait multiple years to attend a fully-funded school. It is time for a funding system that is student centered. It is time for transparency and accountability in Connecticut's education funding. That is why I believe this bill must be passed. I appreciate the opportunity to speak in support of Raised Bill 948, An Act Addressing Education Funding and Racial Equity in Connecticut. Thank you.

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